Written response to the recommendations from Scottish Retail Consortium

Thank you for your letter seeking written evidence in relation to the Equal Opportunities Committee's report "Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities". As you know, the Scottish Retail Consortium (SRC) was launched in April 1999 as a retail trade association for the full range of retailers in Scotland, from the major high street retailers and supermarkets to a number of trade associations representing smaller retailers. As a sector, retailing in Scotland employs 261,000 people (one in ten of the workforce) in 26,500 outlets across Scotland, and in 2007 total Scottish retail sales amounted to over £21 billion.

Following publication of the Report last November, we provided the Committee with a written response outlining our members' approach to diversity, and specifically to disability. That response continues to reflect our position. In fact momentum on these issues has increased and diversity is now even higher on the corporate agenda.

To reflect this, the British Retail Consortium (the SRC's parent company) has recently established a committee charged with looking solely at diversity issues. The group has been set up as a forum to enable our members to share best practice and discuss their policies and to ensure that retailing remains the most diverse sector both in terms of workforce and customer base. All members of that group represent companies which have devised recruitment and retention policies which ensure all individuals are valued, respected, supported and have access to equal promotion and training opportunities. All our members are adamant that no employee is held back on the basis of diversity be that disability, race, gender, religion, age or sexual orientation.

The UK retail sector employs three million people of which 12% are disabled. Alongside this, 8.7 million people in the UK are disabled and these (whether retail employees as well, or not) are all valued customers. Retailers ensure that disabled workforce are employed on terms which fit, and are able to adapt to their needs and they apply this same approach to their customers. For example, most stores offer wheelchairs and mobility assistance to customers as well as having policies for shopping assistance and guide dogs. It is vital for both workforce satisfaction and commercial success that all those who interact within the retail environment, whether as staff or customer, have a positive experience.

If I can be of any further assistance please don't hesitate to contact me. Yours sincerely

Fiona Moriarty
Director
Scottish Retail Consortium,
30 November 2007